United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
1011 E. Tudor Rd.
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199

IN REPLY REFER TO:

in reply refer to
WAES

27 December, 1999

Ms. Sally Brough
Water Quality Standards Coordinator
USEPA, Region 10
1200 Sixth Ave
Seattle, WA 98101

Re: John M. Asplund Water Pollution Control Facility, Municipality of Anchorage

Dear Ms. Brough:

This is in reply to your letter of December 20, 1999, received in our office on December 27, 1999, in which you requested an updated species list for the Point Woronzoff area. We understand that USEPA is considering reissuance of an NPDES permit and approval of site-specific criteria for metals for the upper Cook Inlet - Point Woronzoff area. The facility in question, the John M. Asplund Water Pollution Control Facility, is a domestic wastewater treatment plant.

The threatened Steller's eider occurs in portions of Cook Inlet, occasionally as far north as Anchorage, AK. However, there are no threatened or endangered species that regularly occur within the affected areas indicated on the maps accompanying your species list request. Bald eagles also occur in the area of proposed activity but are not on the list of endangered or threatened species in Alaska. They are, however, protected by the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

I have enclosed a copy of the Steller's eider fact sheets to aid you in determining whether your proposed project may adversely affect threatened or endangered species. If you would like additional assistance in determining whether this project is likely to adversely impact listed species, please provide us with detailed information regarding project plans. Thank you for your cooperation in meeting our joint responsibilities under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. If you have any questions or concerns about the consultation process, please feel free to contact me at: Phone: 907/271-2778, fax:907/271-2786 E-mail:greg_balogh@fws.gov.

Sincerely,

Gregory R Balogh

Gregory R. Balogh
Endangered Species Biologist

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ENDANGERED, THREATENED AND CANDIDATE SPECIES IN ALASKA

August 1999

LISTED SPECIES MANAGED BY **U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**

LISTED SPECIES	STATUS	LEAD OFFICE	RANGE IN AK
Birds			
Aleutian Canada goose (*Branta canadensis leucopareia*) Proposed for delisting August 3, 1999	T, P/D	ANC	Aleutian Is., Semidi Is.
Eskimo curlew (*Numenius borealis*)	E	FAI	No longer occurs in AK
Short-tailed albatross (*Phoebastria albatrus*) Formerly *Diomedea albatrus*	C, P/E	ANC	U.S. Territorial waters, Gulf of AK, Aleutian Islands, Bering Sea Coast. *The short-tailed albatross is currently listed as endangered only on the high seas, and in Japan and Russia. Current listing proposal extends range and confers endangered status in U.S.*
Spectacled eider (*Somateria fischeri)*	T	ANC	Western and Northern AK (coastal)
Steller's eider (*Polysticta stelleri*)	T	FAI	Southwestern, Western and Northern AK
Plants			
Aleutian shield fern (*Polystichum aleuticum*)	E	ANC	Adak Island
DELISTED SPECIES			
Arctic peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus tundrius*) Delisted October 5, 1994	D	FAI	Northern, Western AK
American peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum)* Delisting August 25, 1999	D	FAI	Interior AK

LISTED SPECIES MANAGED BY **NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE**

Under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, the National Marine Fisheries Service is responsible for listed anadromous and marine fishes and marine mammals other than sea otters, manatees, and dugongs.

		Status
Mammals		
Balaena glacialis	Northern right whale	E
Balaena mysticetus	Bowhead whale	E
Balaenoptera borealis	Sei whale	E
Balaenoptera musculus	Blue whale	E
Balaenoptera physalus	Fin whale	E
Megaptera novaeangliae	Humpback whale	E
Physeter macrocephalus	Sperm whale	E
Eumetopias jubatus	Steller sea lion	T east of 144°
Eumetopias jubatus	Steller sea lion	E west of 144°
Fishes		
Oncorhynchus nerka	Snake River sockeye salmon	E
Oncorhynchus tshawytscha	Snake River spring/summer chinook salmon	T
Oncorhynchus tshawytscha	Snake River fall chinook salmon	T
Oncorhynchus tshawytscha	Sacramento winter run chinook salmon	E
Reptiles		
Chelonia mydas (incl. *agassizi*)	Green sea turtle	T
Dermochelys coriacea	Leatherback sea turtle	E
Caretta caretta	Loggerhead sea turtle	T
Lepidochelys olivacea	Olive (Pacific) ridley sea turtle	T

DELISTED

Mammals
Eschrichtius robustus Gray whale D
Effective June 16, 1994

ADDRESSES

National Marine Fisheries Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
222 West 7th Avenue, Box 43
Anchorage, Alaska 99513-7577
TEL: 907-271-5006

National Marine Fisheries Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Protected Resources Division
P.O. Box 21668
Juneau, AK 99802-1668
TEL: 907-586-7235

Fish and Wildlife Service
Regional Office
Division of Endangered Species
1011 E. Tudor Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199
TEL: 907-786-3520
FAX: 907-786-3350

Juneau Fish and Wildlife Service Office
3000 Vintage Blvd., Suite 201
Juneau, Alaska 99801-7100
TEL: 907-586-7240
FAX: 907-586-7154

Fish and Wildlife Service
Ecological Services, Fairbanks
101 12th Ave. Box 19, Rm 110
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701
TEL: 907-456-0388
FAX: 907-456-0208

Fish and Wildlife Service
Ecological Services, Anchorage
605 West 4th Avenue, Room G-62
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
TEL: 907-271-2778
FAX: 907-271-2786

KEY AND DEFINITIONS

STATUS

E	Endangered:	A species which is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion its range.
T	Threatened:	A species which is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.
P	Proposed:	A species formally proposed in the Federal Register for listing as endangered or threatened or for delisting.
D	Delisted:	A species that has been removed from the list of threatened and endangered species. The Fish and Wildlife Service will monitor these species for a period of at least five years following delisting.
C	Candidate:	A species for which the Service has on file sufficient information on biological vulnerability and threat(s) to support proposals as threatened or endangered (formerly Category 1 Candidate species).

LEAD OFFICE

ANC: Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services, Anchorage (refer to address above)
FAI: Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services, Fairbanks (refer to address above)

Cite as: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1998. Endangered, threatened and candidate species in Alaska. Unpublished report, Office of Ecological Services. Anchorage, Alaska.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Threatened and Endangered Species

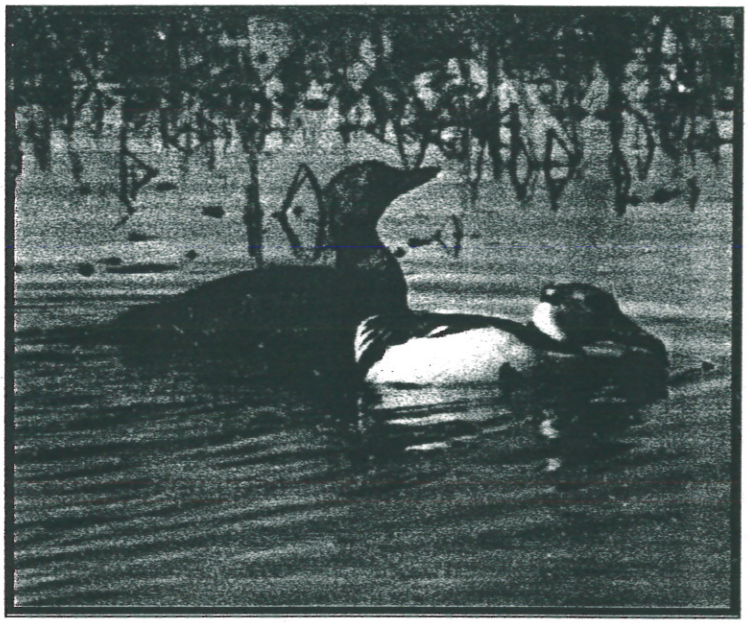
Steller's eider (Polysticta stelleri)

Status

Threatened - Alaska breeding population (*Federal Register,* June 11, 1997)

Description

Steller's eiders are the smallest of the four eider species, averaging 43-47 centimeters long (17-18.5 inches). In the winter and spring, adult males are in breeding plumage with a black back, white shoulders, chestnut breast and belly, a white head with a greenish tuft, and small black eye patches. During the late summer and fall, males are entirely mottled dark brown. Females and juveniles are mottled dark brown year-round. Adults of both sexes have a blue patch with a white border on the upper wing, similar to a mallard.



Named after Georg Steller, who first described the species to western science, Steller's eiders are the smallest of the four eider species. An adult female is on the left, and an adult male is on the right. Photo by Michele M. Johnson.

Range and Population Level

Steller's eiders breed in northern Russia and northern and western Alaska. Although formerly considered locally common at a few sites on both the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta and the arctic coastal plain of Alaska, they have nearly disappeared from most nesting areas in Alaska. Single nests of Steller's eiders were found on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta in 1994, 1996, and 1997, suggesting existence of a very small remnant population. Historical reports of nesting Steller's eiders on the Aleutian Islands and Alaska Peninsula are unconfirmed and not substantiated by recent observations. Evidence of nesting by Steller's eiders has not been reported on the Seward Peninsula since the late 1800's, or on St. Lawrence Island since 1954. Current primary nesting range in Alaska consists of a portion of the central arctic coastal plain between Wainwright and Prudhoe Bay, primarily near Barrow. In Russia, Steller's eiders nest along the arctic coast from the Chukotski Peninsula west to the Taimyr, Gaydan, and Yamal peninsulas. Biologists estimate that the world population of Steller's eiders is around 220,000 birds, the majority of which nest in Russia. The number of pairs nesting on Alaska's arctic coastal plain is very roughly estimated at 1,000. Approximately 4,000 pairs of Steller's eiders may have nested on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta prior to the 1960's. Overall, the worldwide population of Steller's eiders may have decreased by as much as 50% over the last 30 years. Most Steller's eiders breeding in Alaska and Russia migrate south after breeding to molt along the coast of Alaska from Nunivak Island to Cold Bay, primarily in Izembek Lagoon, Nelson Lagoon, and near the Seal Islands. At least 150,000 Steller's eiders, the majority of the world population, winter in Alaska from the eastern Aleutian Islands to Lower Cook Inlet. About 30,000 birds winter in eastern Russia in the Commander and Kuril islands, and an estimated 40,000 winter in northeastern Europe along the coasts of Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. During their northward spring migration from wintering areas in Alaska, Steller's eiders can be found in large flocks close to shore from northern Bristol Bay to Hooper Bay.

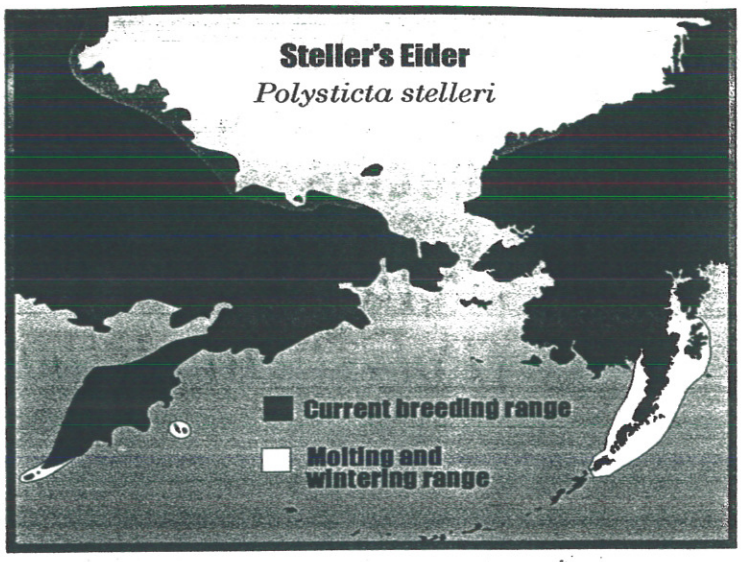
Habitat and Habits

Steller's eiders are diving ducks that spend most of the year in shallow, near-shore marine waters. Molting and wintering flocks congregate in protected lagoons and bays, as well as along rocky headlands and islets. They feed by diving and dabbling for molluscs and crustaceans in shallow water. In summer, they nest on coastal tundra adjacent to small ponds or within drained lake basins. During the breeding season they feed on aquatic insects and plants in freshwater ponds and streams.

Reasons for Current Status

Causes of the decline world-wide and in Alaska are not known. Lead poisoning, caused by eiders ingesting spent lead shot as they feed, may have affected Steller's eiders on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Predation by ravens, large gulls, and foxes on the breeding grounds may be

increasing in areas where populations of these predators are enhanced by the year-round food and shelter provided by human activities and garbage dumps. Hunting also poses a threat to Steller's eiders. Disturbance and loss of nesting habitat due to oil and gas development may have occurred in Siberia. Increased shipping traffic poses the risk of oil spills and disturbance of feeding flocks in marine waters. Other possible causes of the decline include marine contaminants and changes in the Bering Sea ecosystem affecting food availability, but there is currently very little information about the effects of these factors on Steller's eiders.



Distribution of Steller's eiders in Alaska and Russia.

Management and Protection

To protect Steller's eiders and their breeding, molting, and wintering habitat, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service recommends the guidelines below for projects and activities within the range of Steller's eiders. Adherence to these guidelines will help avoid the illegal take of Steller's eiders, and reduce the potential for adverse effects to the species. If these guidelines cannot be followed, consultation with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is required. Under federal law, all federal agencies must consult with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service on any project they authorize, fund, or carry out that may affect Steller's eiders or other listed species.

For projects within the breeding range of Steller's eiders:

■ Assess whether Steller's eiders are likely to use the project area for nesting or brood-rearing. Contact the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for assistance. For projects conducted during the breeding season, a Service-approved survey for Steller's eiders should be conducted in the year of construction, prior to initiation of activities.

■ If Steller's eider nests are in the project area, the following activities require special permits within 200 meters (656 feet) of nest sites:

Vehicle and foot traffic from May 20 through August 1, except on existing roads.

Construction of permanent facilities, placement of fill, or alteration of habitat.

Introduction of high noise levels from May 20 through August 1, including but not limited to noise from airports, blasting, and compressor stations.

Eiders are present on breeding grounds from mid-May through mid-September, but activities any time of year may affect them through habitat modification

For projects in coastal marine waters around the Alaska Peninsula, Kodiak Island, lower Cook Inlet, and Nunivak Island, contact the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Ecological Services Fairbanks Field Office for guidelines and recommendations.

Hunting of eiders is regulated under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. In Russia, hunting of Steller's eiders has been closed since 1981, but subsistence harvest occurs in Siberia at an unknown level. In Alaska, reported subsistence harvest on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta has averaged 34 Steller's eiders over the past six years. Sport hunting of Steller's eiders in Alaska has been closed since 1991. Non-toxic shot must be used for all waterfowl hunting. Use of lead shot for waterfowl hunting has been prohibited throughout the United States since 1991.

References

Kertell, K. 1991. Disappearance of the Steller's eider from the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, Alaska. Arctic 44(3):177-87.

Larned, W.W., G.R. Balogh, R.A. Stehn, and W.I. Butler. 1993. The Status of Eider Breeding Populations in Alaska, 1992. Unpublished Report, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Anchorage, Alaska. 55 pp.

NygDrd, T. B. Frantzen, and S. Svazas. 1995. Steller's eider *Polysticta stelleri* wintering in Europe: numbers, distribution and origin. Wildfowl 46:140-155.

Petersen, M. 1981. Populations, feeding ecology and molt of Steller's eiders. Condor 83:256-262.

Pihl, S. 1997. Final draft, Action Plan for the Steller's Eider (*Polysticta stelleri*). Wetlands International Seaduck Specialist Group, Denmark. 36 pp.

Quakenbush, L. and J. Cochrane. 1993. Report on the Conservation Status of the Steller's Eider (*Polysticta stelleri*), a Candidate Threatened and Endangered Species. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Anchorage, Alaska. 26 pp

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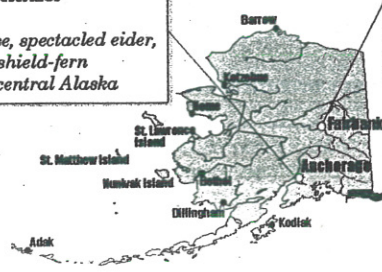
For more information on this and other threatened and endangered species, contact the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Ecological Services Field Office near you.

Anchorage Field Office
Western Alaska Ecological Services (WAES)
Phone (907)271-2888
Lead office for Aleutian Canada goose, spectacled eider, short-tailed albatross, and Aleutian shield-fern
Project review for western and southcentral Alaska

Fairbanks Field Office
Northern Alaska Ecological Services (NAES)
Phone (907)456-0203
Lead office for Steller's eider, American peregrine falcon, and Eskimo curlew
Project review for northern Alaska

Juneau Field Office
Southeast Alaska Ecological Services (SEES)
Phone (907)586-7240
Ketchikan Sub-office, phone (907)225-9691
Status review for old-growth forest species



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